

REMARKS

Claims 1-28 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable over United States Patent 6,457,640 in view of United States Patent 5,979,773. This ground of rejection is traversed for the following reasons.

United States Patent 6,457,640 has a filing date of February 2, 2001. Pursuant to 35 U.S.C. §102(e) it is not prior art against Applicant's invention which has a filing date of November 30, 2000.

Moreover, it is noted that United States Patent 6,457,640 claims the benefit of an earlier filing date under 35 U.S.C. §119(e) by referring to two applications which respectively have filing dates of February 5, 2000 and November 30, 2000. The latter application having a filing date of November 30, 2000 is not prior art against the present application since it has the same filing date as the present application.

Moreover, the Examiner has not provided copies of either of the provisional applications.

Accordingly, the rejection of claims 1-28 under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable over United States Patent 6,457,640 in view of United States Patent 5,979,773 is traversed. If the Examiner persists in this ground of rejection, it is requested that he provide a copy of Provisional Application 60/180,490 which is the only basis for an earlier date of U.S. Patent 6,457,640 as a reference being applied in a rejection of the claims of the present application.

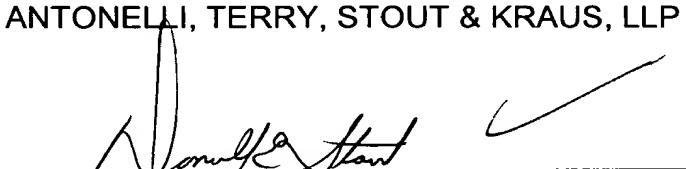
The specification has been amended to correct a minor typographical error.

In view of the foregoing remarks, it is submitted that claims 1-28 are not unpatentable over United States Patent 6,457,640 in view of United States Patent 5,979,773. Accordingly, early allowance thereof is respectfully requested.

To the extent necessary, Applicants petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. §1.136. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account No. 01-2135 (0171.39114X00) and please credit any excess fees to such Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

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